

Resource Manual

HEAD START CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION

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Foreword

The NC Head Start-State Collaboration Office is pleased to share the content of this resource manual with the Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in the State. As we endeavor to offer the best comprehensive services available to children birth to 5 of greatest need and their families, we must be properly equipped to address all areas of development, including health and nutrition!

The rate of childhood obesity amongst preschoolers is rising. A healthy balance of nutrition education and physical activity forms a powerful weapon for children and families most at risk to combat this epidemic. This resource manual provides practical tips for the classroom and strategies to engage families with children most at risk.

The content of this resource manual was derived from the comprehensive research conducted by Karl Allen – 2009 Head Start Collaboration Office *Special Projects Intern* – and L. Suzanne Goodell, Ph.D., North Carolina State University.

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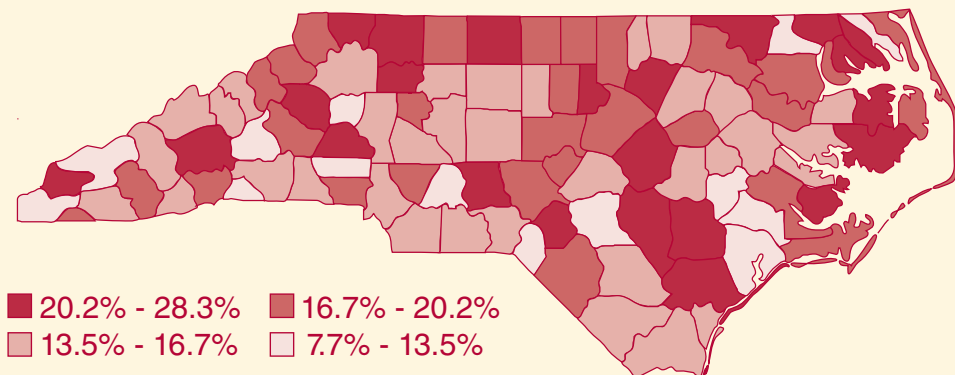
Section 1 **CHILDHOOD OBESITY – AN OVERVIEW**

Childhood obesity is a significant health problem in the United States. The number of obese children has more than tripled in the last three decades.[1] Obesity in preschool-aged children (2-5 year olds) has increased from 5.0% to 12.4% in the past 20 years.[3] Currently the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines childhood obesity as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) percentile at or above the 95th percentile for age and sex.[4] A child is considered overweight between 85th and 95th BMI percentile.[4] BMI is a calculation that looks at how much a child weighs in relationship to how tall they are. The world's leading researchers on child health chose these BMI percentile values to determine obesity and overweight, because children at these weights are at greater risk for health problems now and in the future.

HIGH RISK POPULATIONS – Minority groups are more susceptible than their White peers to many adverse health conditions; preschool obesity is no exception. Among the nation’s preschool-aged children, 11.5% of non-Hispanic Whites are obese as opposed to 13% of non-Hispanic Blacks and 19.2% of Mexican Americans.[4] Compared with the national population, preschoolers from low-income families are more likely to be overweight. Almost 15% of 2-5 year olds from low-income families in the United States are obese and an additional 16% are overweight[2]. Preschoolers from low-income families living in urban areas, particularly minority children, are at an even greater risk[4].

In North Carolina in 2007, over 15% of 2-4 year old children from low-income families were obese. Like the rest of the country, the number of obese preschool children has been steadily growing in North Carolina for years. In 2002, only 13.5% of preschool children were obese. As you can see from figure 1, all areas of the state are affected by preschool obesity. In 2007, Cumberland county reported the lowest percentage of obese children (ages 2-18 years) at 7.7%. Both Alleghany and Hyde counties reported obesity in over 28% of their children, the highest percentages in the state.[17]

FIGURE 1: OVERWEIGHT: % LOW-INCOME CHILDREN WHO ARE OVERWEIGHT (PERCENT) – 2007



**Action for Children North Carolina | KIDS COUNT Data Center,
www.kidscount.org/datacenter | A Project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation**

NOTE: Figure reports overweight at the same cut-offs that we have set as obesity.

HEALTH OUTCOMES – Health risks are a main concern for preventing childhood obesity. Obese children are at a greater risk for serious medical issues, including those listed in Table 1.[3] For years we have considered these illnesses as adult health problems, but as the number of obese children has increased so has the incidence of these diseases in young children.[5]

Some consequences of childhood obesity are social rather than physical problems. Obese children can be targets of early social discrimination. Larger children can be isolated, teased, and bullied by their classmates. They can be made to feel unwanted and unworthy by adults as well. The stress of social stigmatization can cause low self-esteem in children, which in turn can hinder academic and social functioning.[5] These problems can persist into adulthood.

TABLE 1. DISEASES LINKED TO OBESITY

| | | | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------------|----------|
| Heart disease | High cholesterol | High blood pressure | Diabetes |
| Sleep apnea | Asthma | Cancer | |

Along with the same genes, children also share the same environment with their parents.



CAUSES OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY –

The causes of childhood obesity are numerous, and certain factors are considered major contributors to excessive weight gain in children. These factors include genetics and the environment. Perhaps you have heard someone say, “I am big-boned, so my daughter is big boned, too.” Maybe you have even said it yourself. It is true: Children look like their parents because they share the same genes. We know that children with obese parents are more than likely to be obese.[5] However, a child’s genes alone do not always decide if he or she will be obese. Along with the same genes, children also share the same environment with their parents.

A child's food environment dictates what she eats. In today's society, children are surrounded by high-calorie, fatty, salty and sugary foods. Soft drinks and juice boxes, potato chips and French fries, ice cream and cookies, all contribute to excess caloric intake.[6] Additionally, many children consume inadequate amounts of fruits and vegetables in their diet.[6] Another factor that contributes to over-eating is the frequency at which families eat outside the home at dine-in and fast food restaurants. Over the past 30 years, the portion of sizes of restaurant menu items has increased, resulting in greater amounts of food consumption at meals. This, in turn, leads to increases in calorie intake and, ultimately, obesity.[4] Other parental influences shape the eating habits of children, as well. These include the types of food they make available and accessible in the home; the way they involve children in meal planning and food preparation; and their own food preferences and role modeling.[7]

In addition to eating patterns, children learn from their parents and others in their environment about physical activity. The belief that young children are naturally active is no longer true. Children today show a decrease in overall physical activity. The use of computers, large amounts of television time and decreased physical activity in schools, all play a role in children living an inactive lifestyle. [8] This inactive lifestyle contributes to childhood obesity. Children watch more television daily than ever before. Children who watch more than 2 hours of TV a day are more likely to become obese than those who do not watch as much TV. The average school-aged child spends 27 hours per week watching TV. [8] At school, preschool children can be just as sedentary as at home. One study observed that preschool children spend a small percentage of time being physically active and most their time is spent in deskbound activity.[9]

When it comes to preventing childhood obesity, children from low-income families and communities are disadvantaged compared to the general population. Some factors contributing to childhood obesity are unique to or more common in their economic situation. These factors include:

- Neighborhoods lack sidewalks, so there is no safe place to walk.[10]
- Playgrounds are poorly maintained, so children have no safe place to play.[11]
- Parents cannot afford after-school activities for their children, leading to a couch-potato lifestyle.[13]
- Neighborhoods lack large grocery stores and supermarkets, limiting families to shop at gas stations and convenience stores that lack fresh and healthy foods.[13]

Don't lose hope...we can make a difference



- Families have the misperception that buying healthy foods is too expensive and opt for convenience food loaded with fat and calories.[13]
- Parents must work more hours just to pay the bills, leaving little time for cooking. The less expensive fast food options are typically the less healthy options, too.[14]
- Parents with little to no education may not know about healthy food choices and proper nutrition, making it difficult for them to teach their children about the importance of eating healthy.[15]

These are some of the challenges that Head Start parents can face on a daily basis. You may be inclined to think that the odds are stacked against our children and that there is

little we can do to help. Do not lose hope...we can make a difference! Since 1965, Head Start has worked with families to overcome the barriers that have gotten in the way of their access to good health and nutrition resources.

INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY – Just as the causes of childhood obesity are numerous, the ways to prevent childhood obesity are also numerous. In the following sections of this manual, we will present ways that Head Start staff can positively impact the learning environment and influence parents to establish a healthy living environment. Some of these childhood obesity prevention strategies include setting a healthy eating environment in the classroom; incorporating nutrition, physical activity, and health into lesson plans; and talking to parents about nutrition, physical activity and health for the whole family through the various interactions you have with them.



Section 2 **CHILD NUTRITION GUIDANCE AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The Office of Head Start provides guidance to all programs that administer Head Start and Early Head Start services in the U.S. and its territories. Included in that guidance are Information Memorandums, Program Instructions, and Head Start Performance Standards that address the food environment and parent involvement. In this section, we will review some of these recommendations for child nutrition.

Healthy menu planning is a key strategy to preventing childhood obesity. The USDA/ HHS Food Guide Pyramid and Head Start recommend that when planning a menu Head Start programs and parents should stay away from foods high in sugar, salt, and fat. Ways to moderate the amount of fat, sugar, and salt in everyday meals include: providing low-fat milk and cheese for children older than two years of age; reducing salt in cooking; avoid adding sweeteners to cereals and pancakes (add fruit instead); serve whole grain bread products; and serve 100 percent fruit juice. If foods high in sugar are served, they should be offered at the end of the meals, when experts say the acid environment in the mouth is lower, in order to help reduce the risk of tooth decay.[16] You should gradually reduce the amount of fat to no more than 30 percent of calories for the children in your class between 2 and 5 years of age. As children consume fewer calories from fat, those calories will be replaced with more grain products, fruits, vegetables and low- fat milk products or other calcium-rich foods, as well as with beans, lean



Children should be encouraged to try new foods without threat of punishment or promise of reward for complying.

meat, poultry, fish, or other protein rich foods. Nutritious snacks often provide an important part of a child's food intake. For older children, you may wish to keep snacks, such as fruit, vegetable sticks, and whole grain products, available at all times, so that hungry children can select nutritious food for snacks. Snacks also may be provided to the children in your class on field trips, group socializations, health clinic visits, or during other, off-site experiences.

In addition to providing healthy meals and snacks, you should provide the children in your class with a healthy eating environment. Head Start guidance outlines several key components of setting a positive eating environment. First, children learn appropriate eating patterns and meal time behaviors when they observe adult behavior at family style meals. You should set a good example to children in your class during meals and snacks. Additionally, you should serve meals in a pleasant, well-lighted, and ventilated area to encourage socialization and take the pressure off of mealtime. Of most grave concern, children should never be forced to eat. Instead, you should encourage children in your class to try new foods without threat of punishment or promise of reward for complying. Children who are forced to eat, or with whom food is used to modify behavior, may develop unpleasant or undesirable food association.

There are several ways to get the children in your class to try new foods without forcing them to eat. You can introduce small amounts of one new food along with a meal of familiar foods. Additionally, you can prepare the children in your class for new food through activities at school and home. For example, reading stories about different foods, shopping for the food, helping with the preparation, seeing it grow in a garden, and seeing how other cultures prepare and serve different foods. During home visits, you can support these efforts by discussing with families ideas for new meals and foods the family could try at home. They can also plan food preparation activities with parents. Some agencies may be able to obtain food supplies from the local food bank for such activities.

Your program should reach out to parents to help them be a part of the childhood obesity prevention plan. Home visits are a wonderful time for parents and you to

work together. As a team, you can work with parents to plan menus, budget meals, encourage healthy eating habits, broaden children's tastes in good foods, and reinforce balance between good nutrition with physical activity. Through education and support, you can offer parents new skills and ideas for providing nutritious meals at home.

Family eating patterns vary according to many factors, including availability of certain foods, family preferences and family income. You should be aware of these issues when discussing nutritional habits with parents. There are several topics that may be raised in discussions with parents, such as: cultural, religious, ethical or personal food preferences (such as vegetarianism) and eating healthy on a family budget. These discussions may take place during enrollment, home visits, and early staff-parent meetings. One way to gather information about how to assist families in preventing childhood obesity is to ask parents directly about their concerns and typical eating routines. During meetings, you should discuss the importance of eating a variety of different foods in order to meet the nutritional needs required daily. The USDA/HHS Food Guide Pyramid provides a basis for determining the kinds and amounts of the food groups to be eaten each day and would be helpful when talking to parents. In section 3 of this manual, we will provide suggestions on how to incorporate this topic into discussions with parents.

Consistent with the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards, you must encourage parent involvement in childhood obesity prevention activities at home and at school. Involving parents in nutrition programs and related activities in your program can be accomplished in a variety of ways. You can encourage parents to help with planning menus, assisting with classroom nutrition activities, serving as volunteers or staff food services activities, and reviewing the nutrition program. Involving families in food preparation and meal time activities at the program, and discussing ways to use such activities as learning opportunities in the home can be excellent tools for empowering parents to prevent childhood obesity in their own homes.

Food related activities and leisurely meal times provide opportunities for parents and children to both develop a positive attitude toward healthy foods. These activities and a relaxed, but structured, meal environment also help the children in your class with decision-making, sharing, communicating with others, and with the development of muscle control and eye-hand coordination. When planning lessons, you should consider how food-related activities can support and enhance each child's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills and abilities, as well as encourage healthy eating habits.

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Section 3 **HOW HEAD START STAFF CAN TEACH PARENTS**

When addressing the issues of nutrition in young children, we must also consider parents' roles in developing healthy eating habits. Parents need to be made aware that they are the primary influence in their children's lives and if they do not have healthy eating habits it will affect the food choices of their children now and in the future. Parental food habits, including the foods they purchase, eat, and make available to their children, directly influence and shape the food choices of their children. As a Head Start teacher, it is your job to assist parents with food preparation and nutritional skills. This next section will remind you of the times and events during which you might share a message about nutrition and health. Later on in the section, we will discuss some of the nutrition topics you can discuss with parents.

As you read the next section, you should remember that this is a discussion about health and nutrition, not about weight. The purpose of this section is to find the appropriate time and place to talk with parents about health and nutrition. If, during your conversation with parents, they show concern about their child's weight, you should refer them to the Health Coordinator or their family advocate. These program staff are typically equipped to make sure that parents receive the proper assistance they require. Please also remember that you are not a health care professional and are not allowed to offer any type of medical advice.

TABLE 2. WHEN YOU CAN TALK TO PARENTS ABOUT NUTRITION AND HEALTH

Drop-off and Pick-up Time
Parent-Teacher Conferences
Home Visits
Monthly Parent Meetings
Special Family Days at Your Center
Program Newsletter with Section Devoted to Nutrition and Health

Your center has many resources on which you can call when developing health and nutrition education plans for parents. One key resource is your program's Health Advisory Committee. This committee, made up of doctors, nutritionists, or other health professionals from your area, is committed to improving the health and well being of the children and families served by your Head Start program. As experts in their fields, these professionals can assist you in finding creative strategies for reaching out to parents, as well as provide you with relevant and trustworthy information about health and nutrition that you can share with parents.

Your classroom is a great place for parents to see first hand what their children are doing in your class. To engage parents in nutrition discussions, you could have the children work on special nutrition projects and display their work for all to see. You should encourage the children in your class to talk about what they are learning about nutrition with their parents. If you have the opportunity to stop and quickly talk with parents about what is happening in the classroom, you can review class lessons and then discuss ways they can promote healthy eating at home.

You can also use monthly parent meetings as an opportunity to teach parents quick lessons about nutrition and healthy eating. You should plan time in the agenda to talk for 5-10 minutes about any of the topics discussed later on in this section or anything else that is of importance to the parents. You could ask a member of your Health Advisory Committee to speak at different points during the year. You could also invite a guest speaker from a local community college or university to provide a brief presentation on a subject, if you do not feel comfortable providing details on nutrition and health. Parent meetings are also a time when you can discuss ways that parents can get involved in their child's

nutrition programs at school. You can discuss upcoming events and lesson plan activities to which they can contribute time, assistance, and maybe even expertise.

Many Head Start centers plan a family fun day at their site at the beginning or end of the school year to promote family involvement. You can use this time or any other special event to include discussion about nutrition and health. At these events, you could invite a local chef to talk about healthy foods and demonstrate cooking a healthy, tasty dish. You should also ask if they would provide samples to try and recipes for parents to take home. You could also ask someone from a local fitness club to talk about different ways to do simple exercises at home to help stay fit. Cooperative Extension educators and students from local colleges are also a good resource for help. Many times college students are looking for ways to volunteer in the community and apply the skills they have learned in the classroom. You can contact an instructor or department chair at the school to help you identify qualified students.

If your center or program sends out newsletters to parents, you can create a section devoted to health and nutrition. This section does not need to be long and complicated. You can include basic facts and simple suggestions to help parents feed their children healthy meals and snacks on a budget. You could include a healthy recipe for families to try or tips on how to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. You could even recruit your Health Advisory Committee to answer parent questions in a column similar to “Dear Abby.” To reduce the amount of time required of committee members, you could ask each member to choose one newsletter in a year in which he or she would answer one or two questions.

Not all parents have time to stop and talk when they drop off and pick up their children. Many do not attend the monthly parent meetings. You may feel like you do not have time to plan a family fun day with all the other requirements of your job. Even with the limited amount of time you may have to interact with parents, you can use parent-teacher conferences to talk with parents one-on-one about the overall well being of their child. As you discuss their child’s growth and development, you can discuss with the parents their child’s eating habits and other health and nutrition related topics. If you have a planned topic to discuss, like eating healthy on a budget or healthy snacking, it may make it easier to bring up health and nutrition with parents.

Some parents are more relaxed and open at home than they are at your school. While on home visits, you should discuss ways you can be of service to the child

in your classroom and their family. During your home visit, you can discuss the eating habits of the child as well as their social skills during mealtime. Home visits will also provide you with the opportunity to discuss the importance of eating healthy at home. The following paragraphs will provide you ideas on what to talk about with parents during group meetings or one-on-one conversations.

IDEAS OF TOPICS TO DISCUSS WITH PARENTS

EATING OUT – Families go out to eat for numerous reasons, including that they may be too busy to cook and do not have time to prepare something at home. We understand almost everyone goes out to eat once in a while. However, it is important to remember that when eating out, parents need to pay close attention to what they and their children are eating. You should let your parents know that eating fast food is okay if they know how to make the right food choices. Included in the following sentences are several tips you can discuss with the parents of the children in your class.

Fast Food

- Stay away from Super Sized or Value meals. Extra food does not always mean extra value. These meals contain more calories than needed for one meal.
- Suggest that they stick to the regular portion size without anything extra added. For example, double burger with cheese has around 440 calories while a plain burger has only 250, cutting their calorie intake almost in half.
- When it comes to side orders, suggest that they try to stay away from fried foods. If they must indulge, you could suggest they order the small size. A small order of fries has 230 calories a medium size order has 380, and a large has 500 calories. Suggest if they do order fries they might want to share an order to cut down on calories and save money.
- Remind your parents that most fast food restaurants do offer healthy alternatives, such as fruits or fresh vegetables.
- Recommend to your parents that they try to avoid sugary drinks and go with water or fat-free or low fat milk if possible.

Dine-In Restaurants

When you are talking with your parents about eating at dine-in restaurants, inform them that knowing as much about the menu as they can may be helpful. By knowing about the menu, they are better prepared to make healthier food choices and save money. You could tell your parents to start by finding out how certain foods are prepared.

- Parents should choose meat dishes that are baked, broiled, grilled or steamed. They should try to avoid foods that are fried or breaded, because these items are usually higher in saturated fats and calories. Suggest that parents choose leaner meats, like chicken, turkey, or fish. These foods typically contain less fat and calories than red meats, like beef.
- Recommend they remove any visible fat from their food. For example, remove chicken skin or the layer of fat around pork chops and steaks.

When ordering vegetables, suggest they order the steamed, grilled or raw vegetables. They should avoid vegetables that are sautéed in butter or margarine because of the added calories.

- Recommend ordering the salad dressing on the side when having a salad. This way they can control how much dressing is added.
- Ask for low-fat, low-calorie salad dressings to help cut calories.
- Suggest they choose water, low-fat milk, or unsweetened tea instead of soft drinks or alcoholic beverages. This will also save a lot of calories.
- Suggest, if they are craving dessert, trying something lower in calories and fat, like fresh fruits or to share their dessert with someone else.
- Recommend that parents ask for a to-go box and an extra plate before their meal arrives. When their order arrives, they can portion out enough for themselves and their children to eat, and then save the rest for later.



Remind them that many restaurants' portions can be large, and that this is a way that they can save money and avoid the temptation to clean their plate.

- It is also okay to ask the server to remove the complimentary appetizers so that they do not over eat. They can take one bread stick or a handful of chips and remove the rest. If they would like, they can also save the extra appetizers and take it home with their leftover meal.

HEALTHY EATING STARTS AT HOME

Plan Ahead – By planning ahead before shopping for groceries, parents can make healthier meals for their families, and maybe even save money while doing it. Start by explaining the importance of planning ahead before going shopping. Planning can prevent you from over buying, may save you multiple trips to the store, and may help you keep to a healthy meal plan. Next, you can teach parents how to make a weekly menu. You can explain how to plan their meals for the upcoming week or more. One person does all the planning or they sit down as a family to discuss and plan what they would like for dinner for the up coming week. When planning a healthy lunch or dinner meal, we suggest that the meal include some form of protein (example: meat or beans), a starch or grain (examples: potatoes, rice, or bread), and at least one vegetable or fruit. Each item should be served in roughly equal parts. Some parents may not have the time to cook a healthy meal when they get home. Let parents know that they can prepare simple healthy meals when they need to, like vegetable soup, a turkey sandwich, and a piece of fruit. You could ask if they have a slow cooker in which they can make healthy Crockpot meals. Using a slow cooker, ingredients can be put in the cooker in the morning and cook all day.

After parents have made their weekly menu, they should check their pantry and refrigerator for healthy foods they may already have and work them into their menu. Once they have taken a home inventory, they can make a shopping list for the remaining items they need to prepare their weekly meals. Next stop- the grocery store!

Shopping to Save Money and Calories – There are many ways to save money and calories when shopping at the grocery store.

- Remind your parents to sign up for the grocer's bonus and discount programs. This is a great way to save money and get discounts on store brands items as well as other brand name products.

- Before going shopping, they can look at the local grocery store flyers for sales on the items they need for their weekly menu. They can also look for healthy items they may not need this week, but they can keep until the next week.
- Store brand items are just as healthy and taste just as good as brand name items. Unless the brand name is on sale, the store brand usually costs less. Encourage parents to buy store brands when possible.
- Suggest that parents try to stock up on items like quick-cooking brown rice, canned beans and tuna and frozen fruits and vegetables. That way they will always have healthy options on hand.
- When buying fruits and vegetables, explain to parents that it is best to buy them when they are in season. They tend to cost less and there is a larger selection to choose from. If fresh produce is too expensive, choosing canned and frozen items without sauces or sugar-added is a fine alternative. It is better for families to eat canned or frozen fruits and vegetables rather than none at all.

HEALTHY SNACKING

After a long day at school or play, many children come home hungry, wanting a snack. Snacks should be healthy, easy to serve and not too big since the next meal is only a few hours away. You can offer parents some helpful tips for when planning snacks. As with regular meals, parents should plan snack ideas ahead of time. Just like shopping for a meal, buying snack foods also requires thought and planning.

- When buying snacks, parents should try to buy nutritious snacks that are low in sugar and fat and high in fiber.
- Also, snacks should contain at least two of the foods groups (meats and beans, dairy, fruits, vegetable, or grains).
- They should also try to serve water, or milk with their snacks, instead of juice or sodas.
- They should avoid foods high in sugar and fat like candy, cookies, chips and cheese puffs. While these foods are acceptable in small amounts every once in a while, parents and children should not look at them as part of their everyday diet.

HERE ARE SOME AFTERNOON SNACK IDEAS FOR PARENTS:

- Place a bowl of fresh fruit on the kitchen table for children to grab
- Cut up some raw vegetables & serve with peanut butter or a low fat yogurt
- Low fat string cheese and whole wheat crackers
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa
- Small soft tortilla with beans and cheese
- Peanut butter and banana sandwiches
- Pita bread and hummus
- Home made trail mix
- Graham crackers and peanut butter

KIDS CAN COOK TOO!

When it is time to prepare dinner, parents can let the children help. Children of all ages can help in cooking healthy meals at home. Everyone working together in preparing and cooking tasty food is a great way for the whole family to have fun and be healthy together. By allowing the children to be actively involved in the kitchen, they can learn the importance of a healthy diet while having fun and improving some of their fine motor skills.

Parents can let their preschooler help plan the menu by choosing one or two meals during the week that the child can help prepare. Parents can help guide the children to make simple and easy meals that the children might like. For example, children can help prepare a meal of whole grain pasta with meat sauce and steamed broccoli. The children can help measure the water for the pasta; measure the pasta to add to the



water, pour in the tomato sauce into cooked ground meat, and place cut broccoli pieces into a bowl to steam in the microwave. Parents can take the children grocery shopping with them, so that the children can help choose the ingredients. Then when they get home, the parents can let the children wear an apron or a child's chef's hat if they have them so that they can look the part.

You should remind parents that it is important to always supervise children in the kitchen. They will need to put restrictions on which jobs the children can do. For example preschool children can mix dough with their hands, help you wash lettuce and other vegetables, peel bananas, add ingredients to foods and help set the table. However, it might not be appropriate to have a small child placing food into a hot oven or helping stir fry mixed vegetables on the stove. Let parents know that it is recommended that they set ground rules for conduct in the kitchen and that they remind the children of those rules every time they help cook. For example, children should not touch a knife without adult permission and supervision OR children should never touch a knife.

When cooking with children, parents need to make sure they give themselves plenty of time because children may move slower than adults since they are learning new skills. They also might want to have some spare ingredients on hand so that they do not get frustrated when their little one makes a mistake or mess.

Rather than slowing down mealtime, parents might let their children help make snacks for the next afternoon. You can offer simple ideas for parents like letting their children help make mini pizza. Take refrigerator biscuits, canned pizza sauce, and shredded cheese, heat and serve. They can also get their children to help make yogurt pops. Take a 3oz. paper cup filled with flavored yogurt and a wooden pop stick and freeze. There are many resources and recipes available at the local library and on the Internet for cooking with preschoolers.

FAMILY MEALTIME

Family mealtime not only provides opportunities for good nutrition but also encourages proper table manners and fosters language development and conversational skills in young children.

Families with a television visible from the dining area in their home may want to turn it off during mealtime. This allows children and parents to focus on each other



rather than the distraction of the TV. Parents should expect spills and some sloppy eating as their children practice their self-feeding skills. You can remind them to not worry too much about the mess and instead they should be encouraging the children to try new skills with the understanding that accidents will happen. You should encourage parents to have conversations with their children during mealtime. As explained in earlier sections of this manual, you can remind parents to encourage their child to try new foods but not bribe, force, or threaten them.

Little ones love to imitate adults, and they will imitate the eating habits of their parents. You can point out to your parents that mealtime is a good time to be a positive role model to their children. Children who eat with their parents tend to eat healthier foods because they see their parents eating them. You should encourage your parents to talk with their children about different types of foods and the importance of healthy eating.

BE ACTIVE AS A FAMILY

When you are talking with your parents about the importance of being physically active, you should explain to them that having an active lifestyle could help them to have a healthier, happier family. As parents, they have a responsibility to be a role model for your children, sharing with them the pleasures and benefits of an active, healthy life. Parents should look at their daily schedule and pick times that they can set aside as family activity time. You can suggest that they plan

ahead. They should make physical activity a regular part of their daily or weekly schedule, and they could even write it down on their family activity calendar. Also remind parents that they do not need to spend a lot of money to be physically active. You can suggest that they pick activities that require very little facilities or equipment, such as walking, jogging, jumping rope, throwing balls or playing a game of tag. They could also just spend a day in the park playing with their families. These are just a few suggestions you can offer your parents to help them and their children to become more physically active. Listed below are a few activities that your families might like to try:

- Throw a Frisbee
- Catching and throwing
- Go for a walk
- Shoot hoops
- Clothes pin tag
- Spend a day at the park
- Play basketball or soccer
- Relay races
- Tag
- Jump rope
- Red light, green light
- Play hopscotch



Tips FOR EATING OUT

FAST FOOD

- Stay away from Super Sized or Value meals. Extra food does not always mean extra value. These meals contain more calories than needed for one meal.
- Stick to the regular portion size without anything extra added. For example, double burger with cheese has around 440 calories while a plain burger has only 250, cutting their calorie intake almost in half.
- Avoid fried foods. If you must indulge, order the small size or share with someone.
- Most fast food restaurants offer healthy alternatives. Look for fruits or fresh vegetables.
- Avoid sodas and fruit-flavored drinks for your children and go with water or fat-free or low fat milk when possible. Choose water, milk or diet sodas for yourself.



Tips FOR EATING OUT

DINE-IN RESTAURANTS

- Avoid fried and breaded foods. Choose dishes that are baked, broiled, grilled or steamed. These foods contain less fat and calories.
- Choose leaner meats, like chicken, turkey, or fish. These foods typically contain less fat and calories than red meats, like beef.
- Remove any visible fat from their food. For example, remove chicken skin or the layer of fat around pork chops and steaks.
- Order salad dressings and gravy on the side. This way you can control how much is added.
- Ask for low-fat, low-calorie salad dressings to help cut calories.
- Choose water, low-fat milk, unsweetened tea, or diet sodas instead of soft drinks or alcoholic beverages. This will also save a lot of calories.



- Ask for a to-go box and an extra plate before their meal arrives. When your order arrives, portion out enough for you and then save the rest for later.
- Take a small amount of the free appetizer (one bread stick or 4-5 chips) and ask the server to remove the rest so that you do not over eat.

Tips FOR SHOPPING TO SAVE MONEY AND CALORIES

- Sign up for the grocer's bonus and discount programs. This is a great way to save money and get discounts on store brands items as well as other brand name products.
- Before going shopping, look at the local grocery store flyers for sales on the items they need for their weekly menu.
- Store brand items are just as healthy and taste just as good as brand name items. Unless the brand name is on sale, the store brand usually costs less.
- Stock up on items like quick-cooking brown rice, canned beans and tuna and frozen fruits and vegetables. That way you will always have healthy options on hand.
- When buying fruits and vegetables, it is best to buy fruits and vegetables while they are in season.
- If fresh produce is too expensive, choosing canned and frozen items without sauces or sugar-added is fine.





Tips FOR HEALTHY SNACKING

- When buying snacks, try to buy snacks that are low in sugar and fat and high in fiber.
- Snacks should contain at least two of the foods groups (meats and beans, dairy, fruits, vegetable, or grains).
- Serve water or milk with snacks, instead of juice or sodas.
- Avoid foods high in sugar and fat like candy, cookies, chips and cheese puffs. While these foods are acceptable in small amounts every once in a while, parents and children should not look at them as part of their everyday diet.

AFTERNOON SNACK IDEAS:

- Low fat string cheese and whole wheat crackers
- Baked tortilla chips and salsa
- Peanut butter and banana sandwiches
- Pita bread and hummus
- Small soft tortilla with beans and cheese
- Home made trail mix
- Graham crackers and peanut butter



Section 4 **PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM**

A decrease in children's physical activity and an increase in their sedentary activities (e.g. watching television, computers and video games) have strongly contributed to the rapid growth of childhood obesity in our country. Another way to help prevent childhood obesity is to provide many opportunities throughout the day for children in your classroom to be more physically active. Making physical activity a priority will benefit everyone. Research shows that preschool children who are physically active retain higher levels of activity as they reach school age and into adulthood.

And physical activity is important for teachers, too! As a teacher, you can promote the importance of physical activity by being a good role model. It is important that the children in your classroom see you being physically active and encouraging others to be physically active too. Even if you are not in the best physical condition, you can do small things to encourage the children to be active and it will benefit you, too! First and foremost, go outside with the children in your class. The outdoor learning environment can be developed to support development in all domains so that children can play and learn outdoors for extended periods of time. Research tells us that time spent outdoors is strongly correlated with greater amounts of physical activity in children and offers opportunities for whole body exercise. During outdoor playtime, you can model physical activity by moving around the outdoor area and joining children in activities, both planned and child-initiated. If you cannot run with the children, you

can be an enthusiastic cheerleader during their running activities. You can also talk with the children both indoors and outdoors about the importance of being active and that physical activity will make their bodies strong and healthy. The children in your classroom see you as an example of how to live. You can set the example of being active, irrespective of your personal physical condition.

Often when adults think of exercise, activities such as push-ups, jumping jacks, and sit-ups may come to mind. Children's needs for physical activity are not the same as adults. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) has developed guidelines for physical activity for children birth to age five. Their mission: All children birth to age five should engage in daily physical activity that promotes health-related fitness and movement skills.

The following are guidelines for physical activity for preschoolers:

- Guideline 1 – Preschoolers should accumulate at least 60 minutes daily of structured physical activity.
- Guideline 2 – Preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of daily, unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.
- Guideline 3 – Preschoolers should develop competence in movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks.
- Guideline 4 – Preschoolers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- Guideline 5 – Individuals responsible for the well-being of preschoolers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Time for physical activity can occur in intervals and it is beneficial for children to have many opportunities throughout the day to be active. To ensure that children get enough physical activity, provide many opportunities both indoors and outdoors and encourage children to play active games that allow them to move about freely.

Basic gross motor skills, such as running, jumping, throwing and kicking, do not just happen because children grow older, but develop from movement experiences. You can help the children in your classroom develop their gross motor skills while



playing. They can practice running, throwing, catching, skipping, galloping, and side sliding through planned opportunities to play both indoors and outdoors.

Children need indoor and outdoor areas that provide a safe environment for them to engage in large muscle activities. In outdoor environments, children need opportunities to climb, run, jump, throw, and reach to help strengthen their arms, legs, and upper bodies. These opportunities can be provided through landscapes (such as hills for climbing, branches to reach for, and stumps to jump over) or with traditional playground equipment. This equipment should meet Consumer Product Safety Commission Guidelines for Public Playground Safety and American Society for Testing and Materials Standard F 1487 as well as the local, State, and Head Start requirements related to equipment.

There are many ways for you and your children to be physically active indoors. The Office of Head Start initiative “I Am Moving/I Am Learning” offers wonderful and practical ideas for fun and movement both indoors and out.

Consider ways to incorporate physical activity into children's lives. Outdoors, children will develop fundamental gross motor skills at their own rate. They learn problem solving skills and social skills as they think of new ways to play an old game and creatively use the environment to engage in play. Here are a few suggestions of games children might enjoy playing during outdoor play:

- Kick ball
- Soccer
- Freeze tag
- Hula-hoops
- Relay races
- Hot potato
- Leap frog

Indoor physical activities do not require as much space, but children do need room to move about. Here are some fun ideas that may get the children moving in your classroom:

- Lets Go Bowling: take empty 2-liter drink bottles; number them 1-6 and place them like bowling pins on the far side of the room. Take a medium size rubber ball and let the fun begin.
- Hoop mazes
- Make classroom instruments and create your own marching band.
- Dance with scarves or rhythm sticks
- Go on a bear hunt, let the children swim across a river, climb a mountain, or run through the woods. You can act out many songs and books.

When developing lesson plans, you can include physical activities in almost any unit of study. In a unit of study on the jungle, for example, the class can discuss different types of animals and how they might move around. Let the children demonstrate. Allow them to move about any way they are inspired to move. Some children may move quickly and hop, jump, or skip, while some may move as slowly as snails. As long as they are moving, they are developing coordination, building strength, practicing balance and learning about their bodies.

How might you incorporate physical activity in a unit of study about the beach? You and the children can pack a healthy picnic lunch, put on some beach music and dance the afternoon away in dramatic play. Physical activity is fun and it is important for children to get this message early in life.

Section 5 LESSON PLANS



WEEK OF:

TEACHERS:

Unit of the Week: A day at the beach

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| What is the beach? Read a book about the beach and what covers the beach. | What is sand? Discuss how sand is made. Let the children feel the texture of sand wet and dry. Also bring in dirt and let them see and feel the difference. | What is the ocean? Talk about the ocean and how the water is different in the ocean from water in a lake or river. | What lives in the ocean? Talk about the different sea creatures that live in the ocean bring in samples for the children to see. | Can you swim in the ocean? Talk about swimming in the ocean and water safety? |
| Classroom Centers | | | | |
| Language/Books/Pre-reading – Books about the beach, ocean, and different creatures of the sea. | Construction/Blocks/Woodworking – Build a beach house using blocks and trucks | Writing – Write letters in the sand | Sensory/Water/Sand – Make molds of fish in the sand | Manipulatives/Math – Count sea shells |
| Computer | Outdoor (centers and experiences) – Who got my fish? Played like capture the flag. | Science – See if things float in salt water | Art – Use molding clay and make sand dollars and sea shells | Dramatic play – Housekeeping throw a beach party |
| Project Work | | | | |

WEEK OF:

TEACHERS:

Unit of the Week: A trip to the zoo

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| What is a zoo? Discuss what a zoo is and what it is for. Read a book about the zoo. | What types of animals are in the zoo? Talk about the different animals; show pictures and different toy animals one might see in the zoo. | Where do the animals come from? Talk about the different countries the animals come from; use maps and globes so that the children will get a better understanding. | How do the animals get to the zoo? Discuss the different ways the animals are transported to the zoo; explain that some animals are born in the zoo. | Do the animals live at the zoo? Let the children know that the zoo is the animals' new home; show them pictures of how the zoo is made to look like they are real habitats. |
| Classroom Centers | | | | |
| Language/Books/ Pre-reading – Books about the zoo and zoo animals | Construction/Blocks/ Woodworking – Build a zoo drive the trucks and boats and trains that help transport the animals to the zoo. | Writing – Trace stencils of zoo animals | Sensory/Water/Sand – Go on a animal hunt in the sand | Manipulatives/Math – Barrel of monkeys game |
| Computer – Animal games | Outdoor (centers and experiences) – Leap frog | Science – Talk about the different foods each animal eats in the zoo. Ask do we eat the same thing? | Art – Make animal mask | Dramatic play – Make a healthy picnic for the trip to the zoo. |
| Project Work | | | | |

WEEK OF:

TEACHERS:

Unit of the Week: Bees

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| What is a "bee"? Show the children pictures of bees, read book about bees. | Where do Bees live? Bring in old bees nests and hives | Why do Bees Sting? They have stingers for protection; show the children a bee stinger under the microscope | Do bees make honey? Bring in a jar of honey with the honey-comb in it. Let the children have toast and honey for breakfast. | Why do bees like flowers? Talk about pollination. |
| Classroom Centers | | | | |
| Language/Books/ Pre-reading – Books and stories about "Bees" | Construction/Blocks/ Woodworking – Pretend to be "Bee", keepers. Bring in Large latex gloves, Mosquitoes netting and a large straw hat. Let the children build a bee-hive using blocks. | Writing – Trace or copy the letter "b, B" | Sensory/Water/Sand – Go on a "bee" hunt . Hide plastic bees in the sand and let the children search for them. | Manipulatives/Math – Counting "Bees" |
| Computer – Games relating to the letter "b" or "Bees" | Outdoor (centers and experiences) – Shadow tag catch the 'Bee' . | Science – Go outside watch the bees talk about pollination and how it affects the food we eat. | Art – Draw pictures of "Bees". | Dramatic play – Pretend your living in a bee-hive. |
| Project Work | | | | |

WEEK OF:

TEACHERS:

Unit of the Week: Hawaii

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| What is Hawaii? Read books about Hawaii. | Where is Hawaii? Work with maps and globes. | Do people live in Hawaii? Show pictures and talk about the culture. | What do they eat? Bring in different foods for the child to look at. | Special Luau Day |
| Classroom Centers | | | | |
| Language/Books/ Pre-reading – Read books and stories about Hawaii. | Construction/Blocks/ Woodworking – Build a airplane. Add several large boxes, paint, tape, string and construction paper. | Writing – Make airline tickets. Add index cards, markers, clue sticks and scissors. | Sensory/Water/Sand – Cone races. Add small cones and drinking straws. | Manipulatives/Math – Make lays, add silk flowers yarn, straws and scissors. |
| Computer – Look for things we might find in Hawaii. | Outdoor (centers and experiences) – Play Kick the coconut. | Science – Talk about different fruits and vegetables found in Hawaii. | Art – Make grass skirts out of large paper bags. | Dramatic play – Packing for Hawaii. Add a suit case things you could wear on the beach, hats, sunglasses shorts , and sandals. |
| Project Work | | | | |

WEEK OF:

TEACHERS:

Unit of the Week: Nutrition

Activities include meeting, circle discussion, and planned learning center activities

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| What is eating healthy? Look at food pyramid and discuss food groups. | What are fruits? Why should we eat fruits? Make fruit kabobs. | What are vegetables? Explore the inside of vegetables. | What are grains? Bring in different types of grains and bread. | Milk & Meat Make milk shake fruit smoothies. |
| Classroom Centers | | | | |
| Language/Books/ Pre-reading – Books about food and nutritions. | Construction/Blocks/ Woodworking – Transporting foods to the market. | Writing – Fruit and vegetable Stencils | Sensory/Water/Sand – Explore textures of different foods. | Manipulatives/Math – Cheerio necklaces OR Counting seeds |
| Computer – Dole 5 A Day OR My Pyramid.gov for kids | Outdoor (centers and experiences) – Fruit and vegetable freeze tag OR Jump the milk river | Science – Dried fruit experiment OR Discuss the importance of water | Art – Fruit and Vegetable mobile | Dramatic play – Mealtime and cooking OR Healthy meals and snacks. |
| Project Work – Build a vegetable garden | | | | |

WEEK OF:

TEACHERS:

Unit of the Week: Physical Activity

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Why is physical activity? Explain to children about physical activities | Why do we need physical activity? Read book about physical activity | What types of physical activity are there? Explain and demonstrate different types of physical activities | Where can we do our physical activities at? Explain to the children that they can do physical activities anywhere. | How much physically activity do you need? Discuss the importance of doing physical activities everyday. |
| Classroom Centers | | | | |
| Language/Books/ Pre-reading – Books about physical activity and children playing | Construction/Blocks/ Woodworking – Build a bowling lane using blocks. | Writing – Draw pictures of your favorite outdoor activity | Sensory/Water/Sand – Shovel wet sand | Manipulatives/Math – Peg races, have children see how quickly they place their pegs into the peg boards |
| Computer – | Outdoor (centers and experiences) – Hulu hoop OR Play tag | Science – Have children check their heart rate before running in place then after. | Art – Make a sports mobile. Add paper plates sport/fitness magazines glue sticks, scissors, and hole punch and yarn. | Dramatic play – |
| Project Work | | | | |

